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Edward T. Paxton of the Bureau of Municipal Research and Reference and published in 1915.

THOMPSON, G. A. *Business trusts as substitutes for business corporations; a paper read before the Kansas City Bar Association.* (St. Louis: Thomas Law Bk. Co. 1920. Pp. 96.)

*Public utilities reports annotated, containing decisions of the public service commissions and of state and federal courts.* (Rochester: Public Utilities Repts., Inc. 1920. Pp. xxxvii, 1170.)

### Labor and Labor Organizations

*The History of Trade Unionism.* By SIDNEY and BEATRICE WEBB. Revised edition, extended to 1920. (London and New York: Longmans, Green and Company. 1920. Pp. 784. \$7.50.)

Webbs' *History of Trade Unionism* is preëminent among works in economic history. Its first edition, in 1894, set a model of interpretation and exhaustive research in economic documents. In its special field it has guided government bureaus and individual investigators.

The "new edition" of 1902 merely added a statistical supplement to the figures of 1894, a few historical references, and a brief record of events occurring since the time of the first edition. The present "revised edition" makes no material change in the first edition except to amplify at points the first chapter dealing with the origins of trade unionism in England. The early conclusion regarding those origins, independent both of craft guilds and machine industry, remains as it was, though the date of that origin is pushed back "to the latter half" or "the very close of the seventeenth century,"<sup>1</sup> whereas in the former editions no evidence of "continuous associations of wage earners" had been found prior to 1700.<sup>2</sup>

Another item, indicating the very minor extent to which changes have been made, is in the estimate of the comparative strength of trade unions and the craft guilds. Formerly craft guilds were considered not to have numbered at any time "a larger proportion" of the working population than the trade unions.<sup>3</sup> Now they are considered not to have numbered "as large a proportion."<sup>4</sup>

<sup>1</sup> Pp. 21, 22.

<sup>2</sup> New edition, p. 20.

<sup>3</sup> Edition of 1902, p. 37.

<sup>4</sup> P. 43.

Such changes as have been made are thus quantitative, brought about by the investigations especially of Unwin, Galton, and Mr. and Mrs. Hammond, or by reference to the great change in trade unionism itself during the past thirty years. Herein a formal but significant change has been made in the definition of a trade union. The earlier definition as "a continuous association of wage-earners for the purpose of maintaining or improving the conditions of their employment" had been criticized as implying a "perpetual continuance of the capitalist or wage-system." This had not been intended, and in place of the words "conditions of their employment" is substituted "conditions of their working lives,"<sup>5</sup> so that revolutionary unionism is now explicitly included in trade unionism.

It is these changes of the past twenty-five years, in which the Webbs themselves have been high participants, that make the edition of 1920 a new book. Of the 718 pages of text, 471 are revision of history prior to 1890, 247 pages are history, criticism, and their own program since 1890.

In 1890 the British trade unions included scarcely twenty per cent of the wage-earners; now they include over sixty per cent. Their internal organization has been "in many cases, officially adopted as part of the machinery of public administration." They have a "new political organization," a program of "social reconstruction" and are "His Majesty's Opposition."<sup>6</sup>

To an American, even more significant than the political organization is the progress towards consolidation and central control of local or sectional unions. The American labor movement, from 1881 to 1886, copied the British movement. The former "Federation of Organized Trades and Labor Unions" was merely a British Trades Union Congress with its annual convention and its "parliamentary committee." In 1886 this was changed, because it broke down. The "legislative" programs were relegated, for the most part, to fifty state federations, and the American Federation of Labor became a centralizing body determined to consolidate the labor movement and drive out "dual" unions. So that instead of Britain's 1100 "financially distinct organizations,"<sup>7</sup> America has scarcely 150.

The British Trades Union Congress has remained, as the Ameri-

<sup>5</sup> P. 1, 22, and elsewhere.

<sup>6</sup> P. v.

<sup>7</sup> P. 547.

can one was before 1886, a political body in the legislative sense, and it was but a short step to construct out of its "parliamentary committee," a parliamentary representation committee in 1901 and a political party in 1906. The American Federation of Labor, for twenty-five years, has been an economic organization, and would probably dissolve into hundreds of local and sectional societies, like the British, if it "went into politics."

The serious predicament in which British trade-union officials are placed by their double duties as members of Parliament and managers of unions is very evident in the detailed account given by the Webbs and by their own advice to the unions to separate the two positions.<sup>8</sup> The proposed separation would probably result in the distinction, with which we are already familiar, between the "labor politician" and the "labor leader."

The amalgamations going on in the British trade union world are significant. The total number of distinct organizations remains about the same, since new ones start up; but, whereas in 1890 there were only two or three unions with over 50,000 members, there are now nearly a dozen, each with more than a quarter million members. Probably five sixths of all the trade-union membership is found in a hundred principal societies.<sup>9</sup> The amalgamations that have occurred have been mainly in mining and railway service; yet their incompleteness is shown by the fact that there are even yet at least forty separate trade unions not affiliated with the Miners' Federation,<sup>10</sup> each of them including classes of workers long since absorbed in the United Mine Workers of America. The general impression that one gets from these most valuable pages of the Webbs' *History* is that of weakness of British unionism in matters of wages and hours of labor, through collective bargaining, before the present movement of amalgamation, partly as cause and partly as effect of its organization as a Trade Union Congress for legislative and political purposes. They have gained greater political influence and apparently greater support of public opinion than American unions, but not until the present amalgamations have they gained relatively as much through direct negotiations with employers. It would seem, too, that the movements of gild socialism and shop stewards<sup>11</sup> are an outcome

<sup>8</sup> P. 701.

<sup>9</sup> P. 547.

<sup>10</sup> P. 550.

<sup>11</sup> P. 489.

of this weakness. Each of these is definitely a reaction against the combined political and industrial leadership of the unions of Great Britain.

Here the discussion by the Webbs is keen and important.<sup>12</sup> They give a historic review of the oscillations of British organization, now swinging towards consumer's organizations, now towards producer's organizations, and they make a distinction of fundamental and conclusive value between the two. In this they revise somewhat their analysis of 1897, in *Industrial Democracy*, in order to meet the new gild socialism half way. Yet fundamentally their position remains the same. "Producer's organizations" whether trade unions or "gilds," tend towards exclusiveness, for they produce only one product, as a rule, and through control of that product they can command the services of all other producers. They tend towards monopoly. But consumers cannot tend to monopoly; their strength as an organization is greater by opening their doors. The conclusion is that the supreme government of industry, as of the nation, must be in the hands of consumers, either parliament, municipal bodies, or consumers' societies. Private profits must be eliminated and private ownership, for the most part, abolished, but the government of industry must not be turned over to producers—gild socialists—but kept in control of consumers. Yet producers must be organized to deal with the organized consumers. Certain concessions, which, however, are not quite clear, are offered to the "gildsmen" by way of representation on boards of directors, but otherwise the consumers and not the producers are to control the socialist commonwealth.

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*Organized Labor in American History.* By FRANK TRACY CARLTON. (New York: D. Appleton and Company. 1920. Pp. 313.)

Although the book is designated by the author as a short history of the American labor movement and the part the wage-earner has played in the industrial, social, and political evolution of the nation, the bulk of it is devoted to a consideration of certain problems more or less closely connected with organized labor. The purpose of the author is to present the background concerning

<sup>12</sup> Pp. 660-718.